

A Manifestation of Prayer in Formality, and Prayer in the Spirit of God.

IT hath been a Common Observation through Ages and Generations, to perform something as a duty unto God by way of Prayer; and this Common Observation hath descended from one Generation to another (ever since the Apostacy entred) in a customary and formal way, still observing the practice in words, and continuing the same as a duty unto God in the same manner and form, not at all regarding or considering the present want, or necessity of the present Age or Generation, nor the present states and conditions of particular people, but praying in the *same words*, and in the *same form*, from time to time, and from Generation to Generation; and so it flows, as a natural stream in a common and customary practice from one Generation to another: and hence it is that people continue asking, but do not receive, *because they ask amiss*, not feeling the Spirit that makes intercession: and so the *Pharisees* made long prayers, but received the greater damnation, because they prayed not in the Spirit, but in the customary formality, which by the Spirit was condemned. And it is very sad, that people should all their life-time be complaining and asking, and never come to receive satisfaction; and this in the common way of Prayer in this present Generation, who have many prayers in formed words, and with their mouths do often repeat them, and in the formality make a practice of them, and so at set-times, and in set-prayers spend away their dayes, but feel not the Lord nor his goodness. And this Common way of Prayer now used in the Common Worship, never brings people to obtain, but keeps them always asking; where, in answer to the Commandments, they pray on this wise, *Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this Law; and write all these thy Laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.* Now if they would incline their hearts to the Spirit of God in themselves, and obey it, then the Spirit would incline their hearts to keep God's Law, and the Spirit would write his Law in their hearts, and put it into their inward parts, and it would keep them that they should not depart from it; and there they would feel God's mercies, and so come to receive an answer of their prayers: For when the heart of man doth not incline to the Spirit of God, it is in rebellion against him, and God doth not shew mercy to the rebellious; and so people pass over their time in words, but want the Life which should do them good, and when they come to finish their dayes, their hearts are as far off from Gods Law, as the first day when they began to pray that he would incline their hearts to keep it; and they have no assurance that God will shew them mercy, though they have been praying in words all their life-time: And likewise in answer to the *Lettany*, where they pray after this manner; *Good Lord deliver us; and, We beseech thee to hear us good Lord;* and this is the same in their latter dayes as in the beginning; and it is manifest, that they are not delivered from those things as in words they pray to be delivered from, nor are not heard in those things which they beseech the Lord to hear them in, and so they spend their daies in observing a customary formality, and never come to any assurance that they are delivered, or that their requests are heard, and answered. And again, in that which they call the *Creed*, they confess they believe in God; now they that believe in God, their hearts are inclined to keep his Law, and he shews them Mercy, and hears them, and delivers them, for they that believe in God they do his will; and if any man do his will, him he heareth. And then again, they confess that they are miserable sinners, and do those things they ought not to do; and if so, then not Believers; for they that believe in Christ are not miserable sinners, neither do those things they ought not to do, but by believing in Christ they are saved, and he takes away their sin that makes them miserable, and sets them free from their misery, and they do those things that are well-pleasing in his sight; for they that truly believe in Christ, they do not only confess their sins, but also forsake them, and so find mercy with the Lord; and they are not always complaining, that they do those things they ought not to do, but know his Will and do it, and are blessed in their deed. And again, in that which they call the *Lord's Prayer*, they generally say, *Our Father:* Now the Children of God are not miserable sinners, nor do not those things they ought not to do; for *whoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; and whoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him;* and there are not any that believe in God, or can call God *Father* in truth, but those that are born of him; for those that are born of flesh and of blood, and of the will of man, they do not believe in God, neither can truly call God *Father*: for that is the nature in which sin is committed, which makes people miserable; and that is the nature in which they do those things they ought not to do; and that is the nature in which there is no saving health; and there is not any prayer accepted of God, which in that nature is performed: for none in the flesh can please God; and whatsoever is offered unto him in that nature he doth not regard it, for it is the nature from which all wickedness proceedeth, and the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto God: and though there may be many which may deny the Common way of Prayer, as it is used in the Common Worship, and set up some other way of Prayer, as more excellent; yet whilst the flesh and blood, and will of man conceives it, and performs it, there is no difference in the ground, between that which they deny, and that which they set up and practise; neither doth God regard it any more than that which they deny: and though such Prayers may not appear so formal, as those that are commonly used in the Common Worship, yet they are conceived in the very same womb, and do not at all differ in the ground: for as the wisdom of the flesh hath composed so many set-prayers in words, and hath prescribed a way to observe and practise the same, and that none is either to add or diminish as to what is so composed; even so, the same wisdom may deny that prescribed way, as being formal, and may invent something instead of it, in a higher mystery of iniquity; and though they may not speak in

such formal composed words, yet in the same wisdom, their words are formal, not at all differing in the ground or conception, but onely in the expression and oblation, and in their practice it is as formal as that which they deny; for they have a constant observation by way of Prayer, in what they practise, which in itself is as formal as the set-prayers commonly used in the Common Worship; for they can set their own time both to begin and to make an end; and when they will they can utter words, and when they will they can be silent; and they have their own conceptions at command, and can either perform or not perform in their own time; and this is the unclean part which offers unto God, which he doth not accept, neither is any Prayer regarded or accepted of God but the Prayer which is offered to him by his own birth. So that these few things being seriously considered, it is manifest, that the way of Prayer, as it is now commonly used, observed, and practised in the Common Worship, is not true Prayer, but a bare formality, and not only so, but also contradictory, and so is not performed with a right understanding; and it is as manifest that all other ways of praying, which are conceived and performed in the wisdom of the flesh, is not true Prayer, neither doth God regard it more than the other, because it is performed in the same nature, and differs in nothing but in the manner; and however they may differ in the practice, yet they meet in the ground, and are offered up in the unclean part, and so are not performed with an understanding, as Prayer in the Spirit of God is.

Now the Spirit of Life, which is manifest from God in every mans conscience, doth so enlighten him, as to make him sensible that he is a sinner, and in himself is miserable, and eternally liable to the Wrath of God, without the Lord appear for him, and work his deliverance; and as man takes heed to that Spirit which doth so enlighten him, and makes manifest his condition to him, then the Spirit begins to quicken and stir up something in him that desires after God, and breathes after God, and the sighs and groans begin to arise in a true sense of misery, and the breathings go forth in the earnest of the Spirit unto God, and the cry arises for help and deliverance; and though that which is quickened by the Spirit, to breath in the Spirit, be but as a babe in youngness, and that it doth not know what to pray for as it ought, but stands fighting, and groaning, and mourning, in the sense of burdens, weights and loads that lie upon it, yet the Spirit in that state helpeth its infirmities, and makes request for it according to the will of God, for the Spirit knows what the Babe wants, and with what it is burdened, and so makes intercession unto God for it; and in the Spirit the Babe hath access to God; and though it be but young, yet it cries *Abba, Father*, and so it breathes in the Spirit, and cries in the Spirit, and prays to the Father in the Spirit: and the sighs and groans do rise from a true sense of its own weakness, and the want of Gods Mercies; for it understands in the Spirit what it wants, and is sensible what burdens lye upon it, and in the Spirit it draws nigh to God, and submits itself to the Throne of his Grace, and there finds Grace to help it in its need, for the Spirit brings relief from the bosome of the Father, and supplies the Babe in all its wants, and every breathing is ministered unto by the Spirit; and here the Babe prays aright, and asketh according to the will of God, and he hears its complainings, and in his compassion he answereth its petitions, and so it comes to receive from his own hand, and he gives unto it daily bread, and nourishes it with his own virtue, after which it breatheth, and stands by it to help it in the hour of temptation, and so the Babe begotten by the Spirit, prays in the Spirit, and receives from the Spirit, and is strengthened with the virtue of the Spirit; and this is true Prayer, though never a word be spoken through utterance: for the Babe breathes in the Spirit and cries in the Spirit, and prays in the Spirit; and as it so breathes, and cries and prays in secret; even so the Father which seeth in secret, doth reward it openly, and by his Power removes the burdens from it, and with his own Hand lifteth up its head, and in his own time he delivereth it out of all troubles; and from its quickning and first breathing it goes on from strength to strength, and from virtue to virtue, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; and having received strength in the Spirit, then by the Spirit it hath utterance given, and can utter words by the help of the Spirit, and so prays in the Spirit, and prays with an understanding; and that which it expresseth in words by the help of the Spirit, and by the strength of the Spirit, that is a comfort to every Babe that is breathing in the same Spirit; and so the Babes begotten by the Spirit, pray in the unity of the Spirit, and their Prayers return into their bosome, and are answered with a seal of the same Spirit; for they ask in the Name of Christ, and in his Name they receive their satisfaction; and so here is a time of fighting, and groaning, and mourning, and complaining; and a time of breathings, and crying, and praying; and a time of receiving and rejoycing, wherein the Babes of Life do come to inherit that which they have breathed after, and so come to the living praises unto God, who hath answered their Prayers in the riches of his Grace and Mercy.

So all must come to the Spirit of God, by the Spirit to be ordered, and cease from their own words and from their own time, and learn to be silent until the Spirit give them utterance; for the Lord is weary of all Formality and Hypocrisie, and he hath no pleasure in any such performances; for his Controversie is against the *Son of Perdition*, but he will exalt the *Son of his Love*; and blessed are they that are born of his Life, for whatsoever they ask in his Name, their Petitions are answered, and their Requests granted, and the Prayers of such are only accepted, and not the prayers of those that think to be heard for their much babbling, who have many words, but not in the Life.